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Who is going to pay for the \$30 billion or more to be added to the cost of the Afghan war based on what President Obama discusses tonight?

Chairman David Obey (D-Wis.) of the House Appropriations Committee has an answer: "If we have to pay for the health-care bill, we should pay for the war, as well," he told ABC News last week.

Obey did more than talk. On Nov. 19, with little fanfare and 10 Democratic co-sponsors, he introduced a bill, the Share the Sacrifice Act of 2010, which adds a chapter to the Internal Revenue Code titled "Temporary Afghanistan War Surtax." On the day he introduced the measure, Obey stated, "Regardless of whether one favors the war or not, if it is to be fought, it ought to be paid for."

The measure would not affect those earning \$30,000 or less. For those earning up to \$150,000, there would be a surtax of 1 percent, which would be applied not on income but on the amount of taxes owed for a year. For those earning above \$150,000, President Obama would set the surcharge tax percentage. It would not come into effect until 2011. For example, the automatic 1 percent surcharge on people earning \$150,000 in 2011 whose federal income tax works out to about \$22,600 would add \$226. The percentage would be graduated for higher incomes so that overall it fully pays for the previous year's war cost. For the average family, which earns about \$50,000, the added cost would be \$50.

The bill allows for a one-year delay, to 2012, in the implementation of the tax if Obama determines that the economy remains too weak, and it relieves from payment service members who fought in combat after Sept. 11, 2001, as well as those who received death payments for people killed in combat after the attack.

"The problem in this country," Obey told ABC News, "is that the only people who have been asked to sacrifice are military families, and they have had to go to the well again and again and again, and everybody else is blithely unaffected by the war."

Obey does not see the Karzai government as a reliable partner and so "on the merits" said it's a mistake to add more troops and civilian assistance to Afghanistan. But, he added, "if we are going to do that, at least we ought to pay for it, because if we don't pay for it, then the cost of the Afghan war will wipe out every other initiative that we have to try

to rebuild our own economy.

"That's what happened with the Vietnam War, which wiped out the [Lyndon Johnson's] Great Society. That's what happened with the Korean War, which wiped out Harry Truman's Square Deal. . . . In each case, the costs of those wars shut off our ability to afford anything else."

A patriot and a realist, Obey said that despite his personal views, if the administration comes to him as chairman of the House panel that has to come up with the money for the added Afghanistan costs, "I'm going to be there to get whatever they paid for."

The realist in him does not believe his bill will pass, though he has as co-sponsors Barney Frank (D-Mass.), chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, John Larson (D-Conn.), chairman of the Democratic Caucus; and John Murtha (D-Pa.), chairman of the Appropriations defense subcommittee.

One irony of the debate that Obey hopes to encourage is that many opponents to increasing the Afghan commitment support the surcharge to pay for it, while many backers of the Afghan strategy -- if they mention costs -- propose domestic spending cuts rather than new taxes.

Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) wants some figures on what the cost will be to build up the Afghan troops and how long that country will require U.S. financial support.

"We're going to have to have a serious talk about budget and about the \$1 trillion deficit we are in now and will continue to be in," Lugar said Sunday on CNN. "And if we were talking about several years of time, how many more years beyond that?"

Asked about a separate accounting and a war surtax, Lugar split the difference, calling for a separate accounting but ducking the tax issue, saying, "We may wish to discuss higher taxes to pay for it."

He then made what he called "an audacious suggestion . . . we put aside the health care debate . . . and talk now about the essentials, the war and money."

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), a firm supporter of increased U.S. troops for Afghanistan, also avoided discussing taxes and said Sunday on ABC's "This Week": "I think it would be a good exercise for the Congress to look at ways to trim up the spending, which has been out of control since the administration came into power, and prioritize this war the way it should be."

A legislator concerned about expanding the Afghan war gave Obey some support. Sen. Bernard Sanders (I-Vt.), also on ABC, said of the hundreds of billions of dollars spent on Iraq, "We sent that bill to our kids and our grandchildren." Now, he said, the calls for domestic cuts on education and rebuilding infrastructure to spend more on Afghanistan represent "a very poor set of national priorities."

Obey summed up his own feelings on priorities last week, saying, "I think \$900 billion over 10 years is going to put a huge dent in anyone's agenda, whether it's the president's, whether it's the Democrats in Congress, whether it's the Republicans. Ain't going to be no money for nothing if we pour it all into Afghanistan."

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